



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

November 25, 2009

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

I wish you a safe and Happy Thanksgiving!

Mickey's Blog: Facing the New Reality

I am a member of a new breed of Democrats.

We new Democrats value fiscal responsibility, which means paying your bills, reducing your debt, and putting away something for the unexpected rainy day. It means bringing your expenses in line with your revenues.

We follow one simple fiscal commandment. Whenever someone proposes a bill that costs money, they better find a way to pay for it. If not, the bill should die. Pay as you go, or you are a no-go.

Unfortunately, it has been too often ignored on both sides of the aisle.

Even by my fiscally conservative Republican friends.

My Republican friends preach responsibility, but they stumble in practice. They are generally willing to cut spending. Except when it is spending they like. They argued to spend more on prisons, police, and agriculture than the Democrats. They resisted cuts to these budgets. And for six months they have blocked my money-saving proposal to temporarily reduce the number of Circuit Court judges in Macomb. So, they have been disappointing on the issue of consolidation.

We need to redesign and downsize state and local government. We can't afford multiple layers of government, with 1,500 cities, villages, and townships, 83 counties and 552 school districts. State Government has 16 Departments, which the Governor wants to reduce to 8.

I support her.

But my Republican friends have been fighting her tooth and nail. She eliminated the Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Senate Republicans voted to reject her Order, and introduced legislation to restore the department. How can we justify the added cost of a department that didn't even exist 10 years ago? Why can't it be consolidated?

She also recombined the Departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources. Republicans voted to overturn her Order. Ten years ago they were one department. She wanted to also combine them with Agriculture, but they successfully defeated her initiative. If they really want to save money, they should be pushing instead of impeding consolidation.

My fellow Democrats have made similar missteps.

Most refused to vote for any cuts, relying on Republicans and a few fiscally responsible Democrats to provide narrow majorities for the budget cuts. Some Democrats argued that we should restore the budget cuts by using any remaining stimulus dollars or by raising revenue.

The stimulus proposal is a litmus test for measuring fiscal responsibility.

Many school superintendents, supported by worried parents and virtually all school lobbyists, have asked the Legislature to use the remaining \$200 million in education stimulus dollars to restore a portion of the 2010 K-12 school cuts.

Acceding to this demand would take \$200 million away from next year's school revenue in order to add it to this year's (and all future years) spending. This is one-time revenue that now would not be there in 2011, but the \$200 million in extra spending will be. The net result would be a \$400 million 2011 school funding deficit right from the start.

Instead of stability, this action would guarantee new cuts next year.

It is fiscally irresponsible and I will not do it.

It saddens me to hear politicians tell people we can afford to restore the Promise scholarship. It's good politics, because there are 100,000 students who lost the scholarship, and they have 200,000 parents. They like people who say we should fund the scholarships and grow angry with people who say we can't afford them.

The truth is hard to bear.

The Scholarships cost \$140 million. Some suggest we could pay for them by reducing a tax credit for the working poor. That is bad policy on two points.

First, can Democrats really support stripping tax refunds from the working poor (individuals making less than \$14,000 a year) and giving that money to college students even if they failed the MEAP test? The Promise Scholarship isn't even means-tested. Most recipients make or have too much money to qualify for financial aid! Would it be fair to give them money taken from wage-earners getting less than \$14,000 a year?

I know Democrats are accused of wanting to redistribute wealth, but I didn't know that included transferring cash from the working poor to the middle class.

That's unjust.

But there is a bigger issue.

If we have a spare \$140 million, we had better put it towards the huge deficit the Senate Fiscal Agency is projecting for 2011. How could any responsible person restore cuts when we have a deficit awaiting legislative action in February?

This looming deficit should cast a shadow on restoration proposals. But some people ignore the 2011 problem, and suggest we can restore the cuts by raising a little revenue.

Should we raise revenue to restore budget cuts?

According to Treasury projections, even if we freeze spending at current (post-cut) levels, we will face a deficit of \$1.3 billion dollars in 2011. That is an enormous sum.

But consider what it would take to restore spending cuts and then freeze spending in 2011. Using the Governor's most recent spending proposal, the deficit would rise to \$2 billion. *Raising taxes that much would require an increase equal to the tax hikes of 2007, plus 50% more.*

In 2007 we raised the income tax from 3.9% to 4.35%, and added a 22% surcharge to the Business Tax. We would have to do the equivalent of that, plus 50% more, to restore and sustain funding.

Yet the Governor, House, and Senate have all vowed that there will be no general tax increase this year because of the poor economy. How can anyone honestly promise citizens a restoration of funding when it so unrealistic?

This New Reality may be unpleasant, but I think we owe people the hard truth.

Upcoming Town Halls on State Budget

Earlier this month, I held a town hall meeting on the state budget and I had an excellent turnout. I appreciated hearing from many of my constituents and other concerned individuals on their thoughts about some of the very difficult issues that the Michigan Legislature faces on the state budget during these tough economic times.

I believe there is a demand for people to be heard on issues, such as cuts to the Michigan Promise Scholarships, K-12 School Aid, Revenue Sharing, the QAAP, tax reform, and government restructuring. So, I wanted to take this opportunity to invite you to one of my upcoming town halls, coming to a library near you. The focus will be on the state budget but I am more than happy to discuss any other issue or concerns that you may wish to bring up. I have listed the details below and if you need any other additional information regarding the town halls, please contact my district office at (586) 294-0925.

State Senator Mickey Switalski's Town Halls on the State Budget:

Thursday, December 3, 2009
7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Sterling Heights Public Library
40255 Dodge Park
Sterling Heights

Monday, December 7, 2009
7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Clinton-Macomb Public Library
40900 Romeo Plank
Clinton Township

Mickey's Ends and Notes

GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES ASSISTANCE WEBSITE FOR PEOPLE IN NEED

Governor Jennifer Granholm recently announced a streamlined state website that will help the unemployed and other Michigan residents easily find programs that may assist them. The Helping Hand website, www.michigan.gov/helpinghand, offers information on jobs and training, unemployment benefits, health care, family support, and housing. People who are applying for food assistance will now be able to apply online through Helping Hand and will not have to visit a Department of Human Services Office. The website can also help people determine if they may be eligible for unemployment benefits or certain types of public assistance, such as Medicaid benefits.

While Helping Hand covers many programs and services, it doesn't include every available resource in every Michigan community. So the state is partnering with the Michigan Association of United Ways by providing links on Helping Hand to 2-1-1, the United Way system (<http://www.uwsem.org>) that connects people with information and resources. The state is also partnering with the Michigan Community Action Agency Association. For more information on the programs and services that the Macomb County Community Services Agency provides, visit <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/MCCSA/index.htm>.

DHS CREATES MI BRIDGES WEBSITE FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Michigan Department of Human Services is continuing its focus on ensuring that residents receive the benefits they are eligible for. Through the implementation of the MI Bridges program (an online food assistance application and client self-service portal), families who are eligible or participating in the food assistance program can access their account via the Internet at the following link: <http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges>.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ITS 'BE WINTERWISE' WEBSITE

With winter approaching, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC)'s website offers practical tips to residents on how to reduce their winter heating bills and provides information for how low income citizens can apply for financial assistance to avoid shut-offs.

The website also contains information on the Home Heating Credit and the Weatherization Assistance Program, and includes the Energy Assistance Directory, developed by the Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, which provides a listing of public and private programs and resources by county. For more information, log on to the following link: (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bewinterwise_138994_7.htm) or call 1-800-292-9555.

In addition, the MPSC is also reminding senior citizens over the age of 65 to be aware that utilities must reconnect utility service to them free of charge with no questions asked during the heating season, which runs from November 1 through March 31. Customers are urged to contact their utilities directly if they are having difficulty paying their electric or natural gas bill, or are currently disconnected.

MICHIGAN GEARS UP FOR 2010 CENSUS

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Dennis F. Hightower and Lieutenant Governor John D. Cherry, Jr. recently kicked off Michigan's 2010 census campaign, "It's in Our Hands, Michigan." Cherry was named Michigan's complete count chair earlier this year to oversee the state's census efforts. Michigan is working with state agencies to promote the census through communications they have with local communities and constituencies.

Michigan also has a unique problem in that it has more snowbirds than many other states, with an average of 2.1 percent of Michigan's residents identified as part-year residents. Most of Michigan's part-year residents have their permanent homes in Michigan and spend the smaller part of the year in another state, such as Florida or Arizona, which means they need to be counted in Michigan.

Quick facts regarding the 2010 Michigan Census:

- In Michigan, for every person NOT counted, our state loses \$10,000 (\$40,000 for a family of four) to other states over the course of 10 years.
- The census also determines reapportionment and redistricting of congressional, state and local representation.
- It is estimated that 24,000 people will be hired at a pay range of \$11.25-\$19.50 per hour.
- Michigan would not have lost a congressional seat after the 2000 census if its snowbirds had been counted in the right place.
- Because so many of Michigan's snowbirds were counted in the wrong place by the 2000 census, roughly \$200 million of federal funds are spent in other states each year instead of in Michigan, which adds up to \$2 billion over the course of a decade.

For more information on the 2010 Michigan census, please visit www.michigan.gov/census2010.

Office Hours

*In response to requests from constituents, I have added office hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office. **Please note the location change in the November 30th coffee hours.**

November 30 7-8 p.m. Senator Switalski's District Office (31513 Gratiot, Suite B) Roseville	Future Office Hours T.B.A
--	-------------------------------------

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times-check local listings
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

Contact My Office

Website: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski>

Email: senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov

Lansing Office

Senator Mickey Switalski
Senate District 10
410 Farnum
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909

(866) 303-0110 toll free
(517) 373-7315
Fax-(517) 373-3126

District Office

31513 Gratiot, Suite B
Roseville, MI 48066

Monday through Friday
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

(586) 294-0925 phone
Fax- (586) 294-0985